Please amend the first paragraph on page 5 as follows:

In one embodiment, a method includes but is not limited to keying a buffer status to a transport gap other than a standard SONET transport gap **(i.e., linking or associating a transmit or receive buffer status, such as "almost full" or "almost empty", to characteristics of a non-standard transport gap).** In various embodiments, hardware and/or software are utilized to effect the foregoing-described method. In one embodiment, the foregoing referenced buffer status is that of a transmit buffer. In one embodiment, the foregoing referenced buffer status is that of a receive buffer.

Please amend the fourth paragraph on page 7 as follows:

Figure 3 illustrates an expanded partial view of the "receive" side of switch logic 202 wherein **a** ~~**it is shown that in one embodiment**~~ pointer interpreter 208 treats as "almost full" FIFO buffer 210 when it is **a selected number of slots** ~~**twenty-seven (27) or less slots**~~ (where each slot is of size sufficient to hold at least one column of SPE data) away from being completely full. **In the illustrated embodiment, an "almost full" status is set to 27 slots from the buffer being completely full.**

Please amend the last paragraph on page 9 as follows:

Conversely, insofar as pointer generator 212 is concerned, there could be instances in which pointer interpreter 208 is reading three columns of overhead data and not writing data to FIFO buffer 210. Consequently, in order to be safe, pointer generator 212 **can** ~~**preferably should**~~ treat the "almost empty" **indicator** ~~**condition**~~ as **a set number of** ~~**being 3 or less**~~ columns of data away from a completely empty FIFO buffer 210**. In one embodiment, the**

set number of columns can be three columns away from a completely empty FIFO buffer (which for an STS-1 frame equates to 3 bytes), i.e., should the buffer contain three or fewer columns of data it would be considered "almost empty." [[;]] However ~~however~~, in at least one implementation it has been empirically determined that due to practical considerations it is useful to have the "almost empty" indicator set to five [[5]] columns (which for an STS-1 frame equates to 5 bytes), i.e., should the buffer contain five or fewer columns of data it would be considered "almost empty."

Please amend the first full paragraph on page 9 as follows:

It has been discovered by the inventors that since pointer interpreter 208 and pointer generator 212 are associated with ~~keyed to~~ different frame structures (e.g., standard SONET frame 108 and non-standard SONET frame 204 respectively), a status of ~~what constitutes~~ ~~an~~ "almost full" or "almost empty" for a FIFO buffer 210 will vary dependent upon whether FIFO buffer 210 is being viewed from the standpoint of pointer interpreter 208 or pointer generator 212. For example, since pointer interpreter 208 tends to cooperate in writing 87 column "chunks" of payload data (e.g., the number of columns between overhead columns) to FIFO buffer 210, what constitutes "almost empty" and "almost full" from the standpoint of pointer interpreter 208 will be different from that seen by pointer generator 202, which tends to read out the entire payload contents from FIFO buffer 210 en masse subsequent to the construction of the 27 byte overhead data structure of non-standard SONET frame 204.

Please amend the final paragraph on page 10 as follows:

It has been discovered by the inventors that since pointer interpreter 214 and pointer generator 218 are **associated with** ~~keyed to~~ different frame structures (e.g., non-standard SONET frame 206 and standard SONET frame 110 respectively), **a status of** ~~what constitutes an~~ "almost full" or "almost empty" **for a** FIFO buffer 216 will vary dependent upon whether FIFO buffer 216 is being viewed from the standpoint of pointer interpreter 214 or pointer generator 218. For example, since pointer generator 218 tends to cooperate in reading 87 column "chunks" of payload data (e.g., the number of columns between overhead columns), **a status of** ~~what constitutes~~ "almost empty" and "almost full" from the standpoint of pointer generator 218 will be different from that seen by pointer interpreter 214, which tends to interpret the 27 byte overhead data structure of non-standard SONET frame 206 prior to writing any data into FIFO buffer 216.